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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 0510
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RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 DAKAR 000777

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SUBJECT: TSCTP/RSI CONFERENCE: LESS COUNTERTERRORISM, MORE
COUNTER-EXTREMISM

REF: A. ALGIERS 0289 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. BAMAKO 0248 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. DAKAR 0547 (NOTAL)
[1](#)D. NDJAMENA 0206 (NOTAL)
[1](#)E. NOUAKCHOTT 0244 (NOTAL)
[1](#)F. RABAT 0446 (NOTAL)
[1](#)G. RABAT 0612 (NOTAL)
[1](#)H. TRIPOLI 0237 (NOTAL)
[1](#)I. TUNIS 0332 (NOTAL)
[1](#)J. STATE 041749 (NOTAL)
[1](#)K. STATE 045276 (NOTAL)

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Classified By: Ambassador Janice L. Jacobs for reasons 1.4 (b) and (c).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: To succeed in the medium- and long-term
against terrorism in the Trans-Sahara region, the USG must
help countries address fundamental social, economic, and
political problems that undermine their stability, concluded
Ambassadors at the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership
(TSCTP) Regional Security Initiative (RSI) conference in
Dakar on March 13. Chiefs of Mission agreed that:

-- TSCTP requires greater focus on soft humanitarian
assistance and development programs to ensure that the region
remains inhospitable to radicalization;

-- Focusing on sub-regional groups (e.g. the el
Mreiti-Mauritania, Mali, Algeria) may have greater success in
stimulating intelligence sharing and joint operations between
partner nations than TS/CTP-wide initiatives;

-- We need to develop better classified tear line8
information on terrorist movements and groups to facilitate
intelligence sharing, cognizant that partner nation
intelligence services will share most information with French
services;

-- Embassies need greater transparency on EUCOM and
Washington funding plans and priorities. AF/RSA, working
with S/CT, undertook to improve communication with the field
on available programs;

-- Acknowledging statutory limitations on 1206 funding, Chiefs of Mission noted the variety of actors involved in counterterrorism and border control and stressed the need to train partner counterterrorism forces not necessarily under the MOD (particularly gendarmes and coast guards);

-- We need to engage &political level8 leaders of TSCTP partner nations above the Chiefs of Defense (CHOD) level. COMs urged development of a coordinated message on the need for regional (or sub-regional) cooperation, emphasizing partner nation,s national security. All urged greater cooperation/synchronization with France and other European countries to avoid duplication and fill gaps;

-- Public diplomacy programs will be essential. MIST teams, working closely with PAOs and Country Teams, have been very helpful. The current focus on print media is outdated. There may be useful lessons learned in the Government of Algeria,s campaign to discredit the GSPC, particularly for its use of violence against civilians. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) American ambassadors or DCMs from all TSCTP member countries (Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, and the United States), as well as Michael Miller from Embassy Tripoli, participated with senior representatives of the interagency in a S/CT-sponsored Regional Security Initiative (RSI) conference in Dakar on March 13, 2007. Reftels outline national CT threats and actors for TS/CTP partner nations.

THE ENVIRONMENT

¶3. (U) The Trans-Sahara region runs from the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf of Guinea, from Senegal in the far west to Chad and Nigeria in the east. The people of the regions

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range from Arabic-speaking Muslims in the north oriented toward the Middle East and Europe to African Christians, Muslims and animists in southern Nigeria. The region,s cultural crossroads led to a tradition of moderation and tolerance, and today the most of the region's populations practice a tolerant version of Islam. As a result, much of the region is generally inhospitable to radicalization and extremism, terrorism and terrorist sympathizers.

¶4. (SBU) TSCTP nations face similar logistical and geographic challenges, including porous borders and large expanses of uninhabited land. In general, governments lack adequate resources to control their borders or monitor security threats. These vast areas of essentially uncontrolled space -- and their inhabitants -- are vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists or organized criminals. Operationally capable terrorist groups exist primarily in the northern half of the Trans-Sahara region and Nigeria. Terrorism is a major security threat facing the Maghreb nations, and, to a lesser extent, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Although Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operates temporarily in all these countries for recruiting, fund raising, and operational surveillance, most countries in the region do not have permanent operational terrorist groups within their borders. Most partner governments see organized crime and trafficking in persons, weapons, and drugs as the primary threats to their security. The influence of criminal elements is exacerbated by the extreme poverty prevalent in most TSCTP nations.

THE THREAT

¶5. (S) The primary transnational terrorist threat in the Trans-Sahara region is AQIM, until recently, known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The CTC briefed Ambassadors that the GSPC,s association with al Qaida, and increased cooperation with the Libyan Islamic Fighters Group, increased the transnational threat and

capability of the group as well as giving it increased religious legitimacy and providing reentry points for the LIFG into the region. Ambassador Ford noted the exhaustion of the Government of Algeria, its amnesty program and growing intolerance of Islamist political parties and groups. The GSPC/AQIM has operated in Mali and Mauritania, and the armed forces of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger have conducted successful coordinated military operations against GSPC/AQIM.

¶6. (C) Additional terrorist threats in the region include terrorist cells in Morocco and Tunisia, both of which have robust counterterrorism programs to deal with the clear threats they face. Hizballah is also actively raising funds in the region. The Nigerian government is focused on the non-Islamic Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the south and the Nigerian Taliban, which are believed to have a domestic, rather than transnational, agenda.

¶7. (SBU) Spurred by poverty and lack of opportunity in their own countries, tens of thousands of African men and women attempt to illegally migrate to Europe each year. Ultimately, both the United States and the Trans-Sahara region will be best served by a concerted development program aimed at the Trans-Sahara region, thus preventing the creation of an angry and radicalized youth culture such as that which has been the source of terrorist recruitment in Europe and the Middle East.

IS TSCTP GETTING US WHERE WE WANT TO BE STRATEGICALLY?

¶8. (C) Assistance to partner nations under TSCTP has thus far been massively skewed toward military, intelligence, and security training programs, which develop partner nation capacity to find and destroy existing terrorist cells. Chiefs of Mission agreed that TSCTP nations will be more receptive to USG counterterrorism programs if they are better framed in terms of their crime and national security problems

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rather than the international terrorist threat. It is essential that foreign assistance and public diplomacy programs keep pace with military and legal cooperation programs. Ambassadors noted the importance of programs to promote good governance both to the U.S.'s credibility in the region and to combating terrorism in the medium and long term.

COMBATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

¶9. (SBU) Counterterrorism focuses on combating terrorists and preventing acts of terrorism. However, terrorists need only succeed occasionally to be successful. To stop a campaign of terror, law enforcement, security, and military authorities must succeed every time. Military and security programs combat the final stage in the terrorist threat complex, but terrorism cannot be stopped by military means alone. TSCTP's goal is to contain and ultimately eliminate terrorism in the Trans-Sahara region. Rather than concentrating on military oriented programs, TSCTP in most of the Trans-Sahara region should be driven by development-oriented programs. The conflict against Islamic extremism is waged not primarily on the battlefield, but on the airwaves and in the hearts and minds of the Trans-Saharan populations. TSCTP must broaden its focus and take the battle to the enemy on the social, economic, and political fronts. Spurring economic development, expanding educational opportunities, donating books to Koranic schools, building health clinics, providing food assistance, promoting good governance, encouraging civil society and freedom of speech -- all these actions must be part of a long-term public diplomacy and development campaign against terrorism, underscoring the USG's commitment to marginalizing anti-American extremism and radicalism in a region already inhospitable to terrorists.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

¶10. (C) TSCTP has had mixed results to date. There have been success stories, such as the MIST team which implemented a voter education program in Mauritania before the first round of elections. TSCTP has also provided humanitarian assistance to construct schools and health centers. Unfortunately, inadequate provisions by host governments have sometimes been made for staffing and supplying those structures, reducing their intended impact. Ambassadors also noted the need for more quick delivery, high impact programs, ideally available at the discretion of the Country Team.

¶11. (C) There have also been program proposals that have not adequately addressed issues of sustainability or local conditions. As reported in Ref C, for example, some counterterrorist training provided in Senegal was delivered to military elements that have no legal authority to use the training on Senegalese territory. Some programs also appear to be developed without consultation with affected embassies, which generally have greater knowledge of local needs and conditions. In cases where governments do not have widespread popular support, as in Chad for instance, it is vital to consider whether providing training or equipment to military or security services will be seen as propping up an illegitimate or repressive regime.

¶12. (SBU) TSCTP's broad mission statement covers a wide range of goals best achieved through close interaction among USG agencies involved. Various, sometimes conflicting, requests come to Ambassadors, who then set the in-country TSCTP priorities. However, much of the planning process is

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opaque to posts that do not have the opportunity to provide input about the overall strategic priorities of TSCTP. AF/RSA Director Jerry Lanier, whose office has primarily responsibility for the TSCTP program undertook to work with the interagency to improve posts, visibility into plans and funding decisions. TSCTP posts agreed to coordinate more closely, particularly when considering Section 1206 proposals.

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RSI/TSCTP MOVING FORWARD

¶13. (C) With some notable exceptions like the FLINTLOCK military exercises, TSCTP has so far played out as a series of bilateral exercises with some occasional intersection. There are tensions between nations in the partnership: Morocco and Algeria are reluctant to cooperate because they are on opposite sides of the Western Sahara conflict. In addition, the Maghreb countries tend to look down on the more southerly African countries as backward or less capable. Working sub-regionally may produce better results, given the different environments and unique challenges of each partner nation.

¶14. (C) Chiefs of Mission agreed that it would be useful to increase counterterrorism cooperation and training programs with Libya, but recommended against Libya's inclusion in TSCTP at this point given regional political dynamics and the

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suspicion with which regional leaders regard Libya.

COOPERATION WITH EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS

¶15. (SBU) The European Union, particularly France and Spain, are currently struggling with the issue of massive illegal immigration by Africans seeking economic opportunity. The same conditions that breed economic migration -- lack of economic development, lack of jobs and poverty -- are the same issues that make extremism and radicalism attractive.

There is opportunity for cooperation with European nations on ameliorating the economic situation of Africans. S/CT undertook to add Trans-Sahara political and development issues to the agendas of ongoing CT talks with the French and EU.

¶16. (U) Participants included:

Abuja: Ambassador John Campbell, Russell Hanks
Algiers: Ambassador Robert S. Ford
Bamako: Ambassador Terrence P. McCulley, Will Linder
Dakar: Ambassador Janice L. Jacobs, DCM Robert P. Jackson, William Wright, F. John Bray, and Thomas Chojnacki (notetaker)
N,djamena: Ambassador Mark M. Wall, LTC Tim Mitchell
Niamey: DCM Don Koran
Nouakchott: DCM Steven Koutsis
Rabat: Ambassador Thomas T. Riley, Jason Lewis
Tripoli: Michael Miller
Tunis: DCM David Ballard

STATE

AF: Linda Thomas-Greenfield and AF/RSA Director Jerry Lanier
NEA: Gordon Gray
R: Christopher Krisinger
S/CT: Deputy Coordinator Virginia Palmer

DOD/COCOMS

OSD SOLIC: Michael Dumont
JCS: BG Mark Schissler
SOCOM: MG David Scott
SOCEUR: COL Michael Repass, representing RADM McRaven
EUCOM SME: LTC Randy Horton

CTC: David O,Connor

USAID: Dr Jatinder Cheema

DOJ: Pierre St Hilaire

NSC: Adnan Kifayat

DS/ATA: Lynnda Tibbetts

DS/IP: Gary Gibson

¶17. (U) This message has been cleared by AF PDAS
Thomas-Greenfield, NEA DAS Gray and Embassies Abuja, Algiers,

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Bamako, Dakar, N,djamena, Niamey, Nouakchott, Rabat and
Tunis.

¶18. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar's SIPRNet site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.

¶19. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
JACOBS